DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 189 632 CS 205 714

AUTHOR Kreiling, Albert
TITLE The Rise of Black Consumer Magazines: The Case of the "Half-Century."
PUB DATE Aug 80
NOTE 17p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (63rd, Boston, MA, August 9-13, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Culture; *Black History; *Blacks; *Journalism; *Periodicals; Publishing Industry; United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Overton (Anthony)

ABSTRACT

A cultural history of the rise of black consumer magazine publishing is presented in this paper. It examines the interrelated elements in the development of shifts in the institutional support base of black magazines and shifts in the ethos or style of middle-class black life, as reflected in the magazines themselves. The paper takes as an example of early black commercial magazines the "Half-Century," published in Chicago from 1916 to 1925 by Anthony Overton, one of the leading black entrepreneurs of the segregated urban black communities. Overton's business career, publishing career, and the character and content of his magazine are examined in relation to the larger historical contexts of black life and black publishing to provide a cultural history of the early stages in the development of black consumer magazines. (Author/FL)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED189632

History

# THE RISE OF BLACK CONSUMER MAGAZINES: THE CASE OF THE HALF-CENTURY

By

Albert Kreiling
Assistant Professor

Department of Communications
Fordham University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Albert Kreiling

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS205714

Presented to the History Division, Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Boston, August 1980.

The majority of the literature on the black press has examined its political stances and racial ideologies--whether it favored assimilation into mainstream American life for blacks or separate development. One exception has been studies of the black consumer magazines, notably Ebony, that have flourished since World War II. The consumer magazines have often been examined in relation to their economic context--the growth of a middle-class black buying-public and the targeting of products at this market. In place of political or economic analysis, the present study takes a cultural approach and attempts to describe the publication examined as an index and agent of cultural change.

The Half-Century magazine was published in Chicago from 1916 to 1925 by Anthony Overton, a leader in the first generation of black entrepreneurs who created the institutions of the segregated economies in urban black communities. It is probably the best single example of the black commercial magazines that appeared from early in the century, achieved some limited successes in the twenties, but received setbacks in the Depression and World War II. Overton was a mentor and model to the young John H. Johnson as Johnson began to plan and build the publishing empire that came to include Ebony and other magazines. Overton's grandson, Anthony Overton III, president of the firm his grandfather founded, said that Johnson had been "quite thick" with his grandfather, who passed on business advice and suggestions.[1]

The appearance of the Half-Century and other commercial magazines demonstrates that the economic foundation of black consumer magazines, whose success was widely noted after World War II, was being laid earlier. Moreover, the present study aims to show that economic analysis alone is not sufficient to provide an account of the development of consumer publishing, which was also associated with transformations in the cultural ethos of middle-class life. The study indicates that the content of the Half-Century registered a shift among middle-class blacks from a frugal, restrained work ethic to a worldly life style accepting of materialistic display and urban pleasures--a shift from the culture of production to the culture of consumption.[2]

Studies of the black press early in the century have focused upon black hopes in relation to the political activity of the Progressive period, the role of the press in the struggle between the two factions of blacks aligned behind Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois, and the later take-up of socialism by a few young black radicals. Yet, when the smoke had cleared away after the political debate, it was clear that the most significant development among blacks had been a general modernization of middle-class life styles in the expanded urban communities. As both earlier observers and recent historians have noted, this also was true among Americans generally. After the Progressive hopes faded and post-war disenchantment set in, Americans beheld the modernized, secular, materialistic life styles of the Jazz Age that had supplanted the genteel life styles of the nineteenth century.[3]

I

Before the Civil War, blacks published a handful of Abolitionist magazines and one polished cultural journal. But these ventures were short lived, and most of the few durable black magazines of the nineteenth century were the organs of churches.

More important as precursors of twentieth-century developments were the general magazines that started to appear around 1890. In 1888 Rev. William J. Simmons left the editorship of the American Baptist to start Our Women and Children, which carried features on women, home life, religion, education, and other subjects, but lasted only a year. Other general magazines that carried thoughtful articles on varied topics included J. S. Woods' Afro-American Budget, which ran from 1889 to 1891; Howard's American Magazine, started in 1889 and lasting through the nineties; and Charles Alexander's Review, which lasted about three years in the middle of the decade. These journals drew as authors and readers members of the educated Talented Tenth of the race, some of them long-time residents of northern cities, some others the most ambitious of southern blacks who were the first to migrate to the northern cities. The subject matter of the publications revealed that the members of the Talented Tenth were consciously casting about for new life styles as they, like many Americans, were becoming restive with nineteenth-century genteel customs, and that they were developing an expanded range of secular interests.[4]

In the nineties and early in the new century, a two-fold development was under way in both black magazines and newspapers. One level, illustrated by the new magazines of the nineties, involved shifts and broadening in content, which reflected the cultural transformation of a groping search for new life styles in the nascent urban-industrial age. Alongside this development was an interrelated struggle over the support base of black publications.

Most of the earlier magazines and a number of the leading newspapers had been the organs of churches and fraternal organizations, corresponding to the organization of middle-class social life in the nineteenth century in church and lodge communities. As the secular interests of blacks expanded, new organizations appeared and provided the support base for new publications. The rise of the black women's club movement spawned a number of magazines starting in the 1890's. Later the racial advancement organizations, the NAACP and the Urban League, started periodicals, Crisis in 1910 and Opportunity in 1923, which were the most widely read general magazines before World War II.

Except for the organs of churches and fraternal organizations, most of the leading black newspapers in the late nineteenth century were political papers, both in the sense that the editors depended upon political subsidies for support, and in the sense that their content focused upon politics. Attempts to transfer the political model of the partisan papers into the magazine field were unsuccessful. In fact, the political newspapers were soon to be overshadowed by the

new commercial papers, such as the Norfolk Journal and Guide, founded in 1899; the Chicago Defender, started in 1905; and the Pittsburgh Courier, started in 1910. Commercial magazines were starting up as well, though the commercial model would not clearly triumph in the magazine field until after World War II.

The first important commercial magazine was the Colored American Magazine, started in 1900 by Walter Wallace, who was not part of the Talented Tenth and made no pretense at literary ability. Wallace was representative of the rising group of black businessmen, many of them somewhat later migrants from the South than the Talented Tenth, who established the segregated economic institutions of black communities and generally supported Booker T. Washington instead of W. E. B. DuBois. Wallace partly modeled the Colored American after the "dime magazines" started by white commercial publishers in the 1890's, solicited advertising, and set up a network of agents around the country.

Initially, the content of the Colored American did not mirror the ethos of the business class, but under Wallace's editor, Pauline Hopkins, of old New England stock, sought to revive the intellectual, literary, and Abolitionist tradition favored by the Talented Tenth. The content of the magazine was brought into step with the developing ethos of the business class in 1904, when Fred R. Moore purchased it, partly with funds secretly loaned by Washington, installed himself as editor and publisher and Washington's nephew, Roscoe Conkling Simmons, as associate editor. Subsequently the magazine promoted the activities of the National Negro Business League and other Washington-dominated organizations and carried articles reflecting the preoccupations and the self-help ethic of the business class.[5]

Subsequently, commercial magazines repeatedly appeared, but until Ebony none achieved spectacular success. Robert Abbott of the Chicago Defender and Robert Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier tried to duplicate their newspaper successes in magazines but soon backed away from the experiments.[6] Even though no single publication was overwhelmingly successful, commercial magazines were continually starting up by the twenties. At the close of World War II, Hallie Brooks found nine general magazines, three digests, four pictorial magazines, three entertainment journals, two women's magazines, and three journals of fiction published by blacks on newsstands in Chicago.[7]

Like the Colored American under Moore, the first commercial magazines depicted the frugal, restrained life style of the Protestant Ethic. The shift needed for the development of consumer magazines was the displacement of this ethos by a secular, materialistic life style--the shift from the culture of production to the culture of consumption. As Edward Shils noted, in the modernizing urban communities, middle-class blacks initially drew a sharp line between the "respectable" world and the "shady." Middle-class youth and lower-class persons of all ages crossed the line first by taking up worldly urban life styles with a carefree acceptance of pleasure, glamour, materialism, and hedonism, while older members of the middle class made the leap later and more haltingly.[8] The Half-Century, which exemplifies the

commercial support base, also illustrates in the changing themes of its content the shift in the middle class from the culture of production to the culture of consumption--the cultural transformation associated with the rise of consumer publishing.

II

Anthony Overton was born in 1865 in Monroe, Louisiana, where his family operated a grocery store. Driven from the community by angry whites, the family fled to Kansas. The father never made it, and the young Overton had to begin work as a child. He worked his way through Washburn College and the Law School of the University of Kansas. Except for a brief sojourn to Oklahoma, he pursued a career in Kansas, where he operated a general store, served as a municipal judge, and acquired an interest in numerous business ventures.

In 1898 Overton combined several small firms into the Overton-Hygenic Manufacturing Company. Initially, the firm's chief product was baking powder, but it was soon overshadowed by a face powder for Negro women, High Brown, that Overton developed. In 1911 Overton moved the firm to Chicago, and by 1915 it was capitalized at $286,000, turned out 62 products, and employed 32 persons. Overton's wife died the year after the move, and he never remarried. He expanded his business empire by founding the publishing company in 1916, the Douglass National Bank in 1923, and the Victory Life Insurance Company in 1924. In the mid-twenties he erected an impressive building in the heart of the black business district.[9]

Overton had over-extended his capital, and in the Depression he lost the bank and the insurance company. His troubles partly stemmed from his rivalry with another businessman, Jesse Binga, who started the first black bank in Chicago. Overton wanted to outdo Binga by starting the first national bank, and Overton's insurance company followed on the heels of Binga's insurance company. Binga, who received some of his money from his father-in-law, underworld leader "Mushmouth" Johnson, landed in the penitentiary for corrupt business practices. Overton was too ambitious, but honest, an obituary concluded, and he retained control of the manufacturing company and the publishing company until his death in 1946.[10]

An example of the secularization of the Protestant Ethic described by Max Weber, Overton was reared in a staunch Baptist background and remained a restrained, frugal man until his death. He kept a plaque proclaiming the evils of tobacco on his office wall and turned envelopes inside out to use as paper. Yet, in later life, business probably was his only religion. His grandson said that he was not religious, but remained a church deacon for business reasons. He moved his firm to Chicago for business reasons and did not like cities, city customs, or city people.

Overton apparently took Yankee entrepreneurs as his personal models. He identified with easterners and disliked southerners. He

knew and admired some of the successful white industrialists in Chicago, such as utility baron Samuel Insull and steel magnate Martin Ryerson. A friend of Booker T. Washington, Overton was active in Washington's National Negro Business League and served as president of the Chicago chapter. He frequently gave speeches on business topics, traveling to various parts of the country to aid in the promotion of black commercial development.[11]

III

In 1916 Overton started the monthly Half-Century magazine and in 1925 converted it into a weekly newspaper, the Chicago Bee, which remained a leading paper in the community until 1947. In part, Overton conceived of his publications as advertising media for his other enterprises. He probably kept fairly close watch over editorial policy and sharply controlled advertising, as he intensely disliked the fortune-teller and oil-well ads, as well as liquor and tobacco advertising, in many black publications.[12]

The editor of the Half-Century, and later managing editor of the Bee, was Katherine E. Williams. Born in Nebraska in 1894, she married John Irvin, Jr., in 1917. She was identified with a group of young blacks of the second decade of the century, who, though similar to older members of the business class in many ways, were typically college graduates and set themselves apart somewhat by their interest in literary and cultural affairs. She participated in the literary, dramatic, and social affairs of several local clubs and wrote numerous pieces of fiction for the magazine, which often appeared under a pseudonym.[13]

The Half-Century never had a large staff. In its early years, Kathryn M. Johnson, Cyril A. Crichlow, and Dr. M. A. Majors served as associate editor. Formerly the NAACP's first field worker, Kathryn Johnson was more militant on race rights than the other staff members, and she investigated and reported in the magazine on injustices to blacks. But after a year she left to become a YMCA worker among black soldiers in France. In the twenties she became noted as a promoter of race pride by traveling the country to sell books on black history.[14]

Crichlow was little noted in the local community, but Majors was a visible figure. Born in Waco, Texas, in 1864, he became a physician and served as the superintendent of a black hospital. In 1901 he came to Chicago, where he was instrumental in forming a medical association. Nearly as active in journalism as in medicine, Majors edited the Texas Searchlight, was associate editor of the Indianapolis Freeman and the Chicago Broad Ax, and wrote for numerous other publications. He also wrote children's books and poetry. With a missionary zeal to promote the life style of the business class, Majors sounded a Social Darwinian call to progress under the banner of "morality, Christianity and work," and vehemently assailed the behavior of the lower class, "the debris of humanity." A staunch supporter of Booker T. Washington, he became editor of the Chicago

Conservator at Washington's behest in 1908 to bring the paper into the Washington camp.[15]

An attractive magazine of 16 to 24 pages, the Half-Century carried a photograph on the cover and a few pictures and drawings inside. It included short stories, sentimental poetry, news, editorials, features on black businesses and personalities, reports on disapproved local conditions, and departments on fashion, cooking, and health. The news page covered events across the nation and focused upon the emerging world of black business and women's and professional organizations.

Self-consciously modeled after white commercial magazines, the Half-Century illustrated the repetitive, formularized approach of commercial publishing. Most of the selfsame feature articles were sentimental, often moralistic romance stories with shallow, obvious plots and highly stereotyped characters. But the staff defended the light, arid content. "Our people--tired at the end of the day's work--have no time to consume reading solid literary stuff," an editorial statement said. "They want diversion and recreation, and will read anything stimulating and refreshing."[16]

Yet the staff did not regard the formulaic, moralistic stories as simply a marketing device, but, especially at the outset, stressed the value of the magazine for race progress. With typical middle-class attitudes toward literature, the staff boosted the magazine's stories, not for the sake of art, but as inspiration and instruction to engender race pride, ambition, and correct standards of living and to furnish worthwhile models for emulation. The short stories, an editorial writer said, aimed to present blacks as "leading characters in inspirational roles--roles whose settings and themes contemplate that some day soon the Negro may hope to see himself engaged in the same activities."[17]

In 1925 the Half-Century was replaced by the Chicago Bee, which suffered a setback in the Depression, but reached a sizable local readership and a significant national following before the collapse. Overton erected a $200,000 plant, and in 1929 the paper added a four-page rotogravure supplement. Eventually developing an extensive "morgue," the Bee displayed a highly professional style and operation for black papers of its day.[18]

IV

As background to a discussion of the Half-Century's content, it is necessary to sketch the social context of the Chicago black community at the time. Chicago in the nineteenth century harbored a small black elite or upper class, which identified with the Abolitionist tradition and its heroes. Members of the elite sometimes achieved success in service trades and other occupations, but the distinguishing mark of elite status was a genteel, respectable way of life.[19]

Following Reconstruction, with black political hopes dashed in the South, a small trickle of southern blacks started to enter Chicago, some of them the most talented and educated of southern blacks. Often these northward-bound members of the Talented Tenth had been inculcated in the traditions of Yankee frugality and Puritan piety espoused in the schools set up by New England missionaries to aid the Freedmen after the Civil War. Some of the newcomers were assimilated into the elite in Chicago and assumed its outlook and customs. But young blacks, both newcomers and established residents--whom I have elsewhere called the Afro-American Agitators--were exhibiting increased race-consciousness and ambition for professional achievement.[20] By the turn of the century, the young professionals dominated the elite. Thus, although the younger set of the eighties and nineties entered the established elite and assumed its culture, they were beginning to transform the badge of elite membership from a way of life to achieved marks of status.[21]

By the turn of the century, with the tide of southern migrants rising, the old elite found itself challenged by recently arrived striving businessmen and professionals, who were building a segregated black economy on Chicago's South Side. The later newcomers did not assimilate to the culture and outlook of the old elite, but transformed it as they rose to become the community's dominant elite by the twenties. The hero of the rising business class was Booker T. Washington, whose life and writings reveal an important ambiguity in his image among his supporters. Influenced by the austere Puritanism of Samuel Armstrong at Hampton Institute, Washington impressed the same stamp of Puritan piety on his own Tuskegee Institute and sometimes appeared to be the personification of a pious, sacred version of the Protestant Ethic. At other times, he seemed to represent a secular, pragmatic, materialistic, Social Darwinist transformation of the Protestant Ethic. The same shift was going on among the new urban middle class and would be much apparent in themes in the Half-Century.[22]

Open hostility between the old elite and the rising business class rocked the Chicago black community in the first decade of the new century. Members of the old elite found the behavior of the striving newcomers vulgar and offensive. The tension between the camps surfaced in the clash over two alternative ideological programs for the race. The business class generally advocated a conservative policy of racial advancement through economic development rather than political action and protest, vocational training rather than liberal education, and the development of black institutions rather than assimilation into white society and its institutions. Their opponents, sometimes called the Race Radicals, who generally belonged to the Talented Tenth, rallied to the support of the NAACP in its early assimilationist phase, favored outspoken protest against injustices and discrimination, and called for liberal education for "manhood" instead of industrial training which seemed to accept a servile role for blacks in America.[23]

Many of the Race Radicals were strikingly like the whites of a dispossessed nineteenth-century gentry, who raised the first cries

of Progressive protest in the "status revolt" against the rise of an industrial Plutocracy.[24] At the center of the spirit of the Race Radicals was a foredoomed defense of the genteel life style of the old elite, with its stress upon individual character and a respectable way of life as the prime requisites for social status. W. E. B. DuBois, the leading spokesman of the Race Radicals, personified the old elite's ideal of "character" and mused in his autobiography about its displacement by more superficial standards of "conduct" for judging persons.[25] With the toppling of the old elite's culture and its ideal of "character" associated with a whole way of life as the prime mark of status came the rapid development of a modern middle-class status order marked by superficial and achieved criteria--wealth, career success, educational credentials, material display, lavish entertaining. This development was a central requirement for the emergence of a social world in which consumer magazines would flourish.

In the second decade of the century, the two factions were coming together in a reconstituted and expanded elite. Some themes from both sides were incorporated in a common middle-class ideology of "moderate racialism," as St. Clair Drake called it, which reflected the conservatives' pride in separate black institutions but took up some of the Race Radicals' militance.[26] Partly the two factions were drawn together by common foes. The wave of hostility toward blacks, which accompanied the Red Scare following World War I, contributed to a heightened race-consciousness and unity. The middle-class factions also were drawn together as they both came to feel threatened by the appearance of an enormous lower-class black population in Chicago in the Great Migration of the war years.

Moreover, the customs and outlooks of both factions were being challenged by younger middle-class blacks who were reaching maturity on the new urban scene, and who by the twenties were often being called the New Negroes. The architects of a wave of radicalism in the war years and of the artistic freedom of the Harlem Renaissance, the young blacks brought an intensified racial consciousness and an increased acceptance of worldly pleasures into the ethos of middle-class life.[27] At first, older middle-class blacks were often shocked by the behavior of their children and by the "good timing" of the lower class, but increasingly in the twenties older members of the middle class were abandoning traditional attitudes and restraints to take up the carefree worldly Zeitgeist of the Jazz Age.

In the twenties the expanded and relatively prosperous black middle class created an ostentatious, materialistic social world on Chicago's South Side--a prototype of others across the nation, and the cultural vortex in which were rising the life styles and habits of modern consumerism. Later E. Franklin Frazier assailed the new urban Black Bourgeoisie, who lived in a superficial world in which acquired marks of status--income, occupation, educational credentials, material display--had taken the place of a coherent total way of life rooted in heritage and tradition, which had been the badge of status of the nineteenth-century elite.[28]

These developments were not peculiar to blacks, but were widely taking place among middle-class Americans, especially in urban areas, as a new "success" ethic was supplanting older ways of life associated with religious, moral, and cultural traditions.[29] Among blacks as among others, these developments laid the foundations of consumer life styles in the twenties, allowing the increasing success of consumer magazines like the Half-Century. On the one hand, in both editorial content and advertising, such magazines could purport to teach habits of dress and demeanor needed to move up the pliable status ladder. Moreover, as Bernard Bailyn and his colleagues have argued, the take-up of formal, achieved criteria of status in modern urban society relegated personal behavior to the realm of individual discretion.[30] Among middle-class blacks as among many other Americans, old restraints upon consumption and worldly pleasures began to crumble since these behaviors were no longer relevant to one's status in the community.

V

The Half-Century promoted the commercial work ethic as the best route to salvation for blacks instead of the old elite's program of politics and intellectualism. It encouraged a restrained, dignified style of conduct, illustrated in calls for "cooperation," in contrast to the militant posture of the Race Radicals. In response to the racial violence of 1919, the magazine temporarily adopted a militant stance, but the major long-term consequence of the hostility was to intensify the pre-existing emphasis on racial independence and self-help.[31]

Previously cool to the NAACP, the magazine became an ardent supporter in 1919, but this was mainly a reflection of a shift in the significance the association held among blacks. Previously identified with the revived Abolitionist spirit of the Race Radicals and white liberals, the NAACP was moving toward the spirit of the black middle class. Its new image stressed the idea of an organization supported and led by blacks, using cooperative self-help to advance the race. The Half-Century supported numerous Progressive goals, such as education, health, temperance, the "good government" movement, and women's activities, but as with the NAACP these programs sometimes assumed a somewhat different meaning among the business class than they held for their staunchest proponents. Thus, among blacks as among other Americans, some residue of the moral fervor of activists in the "Age of Reform" was assumed by a larger, rising middle-class stratum as the spirited activity of the reformers waned.

The awakened enthusiasm for the NAACP was the most conspicuous example of the Half-Century's mounting calls for organization. Increasingly a paradox of so much popular literature of the twentieth century appeared in the magazine's content, which simultaneously espoused an individualistic self-help ethic while it supported large-scale social organizations that seemed to make that ethic obsolete. Numerous Half-Century stories were Horatio Alger-like paeans to hard

work, diligence, thrift, and a disciplined life style. Yet the individualistic ethic drawn from a simpler past commingled with a Social Darwinist faith in progress and industrialism, with an interpenetration of religious and commercial symbolism illustrated by a reference to "Christ Jesus, the Chief Executive of the World."[32]

The magazine's content revealed a sense of exhilaration at the growth of a self-contained black world with its own institutions on Chicago's South Side. The gospel of progress and successful race businesses seen as its embodiment were constantly heralded. But there was another image of the urban world, widely evident in popular literature, of the city as a place of challenge, which required a determined commitment to the middle-class ethic if one hoped to survive.

With the appearance of a large lower-class population in the Great Migration, Half-Century writers betrayed the sense that they were engaged in an open struggle to preserve the dominance and legitimacy of the middle-class life style in the black community. Their enthusiasm for Progressive measures often grew out of their view of them as devices to teach middle-class habits to the lower class. Most despised of lower-class traits were passivity, resignation, and lack of ambition, which appalled the striving middle class with its faith in progress. Writers repeatedly denounced lower-class habits that expressed these attitudes, such as superstition, blues music, and other-worldly church services.

The writers also assailed features of black newspapers aimed at the lower class, such as sensationalism and fortune-teller ads. The Half-Century and the Bee shunned such features in favor of a respectable middle-class style. Thus central to the meaning and appeal of the publications was the fact that they represented a distinctive social style identified with the middle class and distinguished from the styles of other black groups--the lower class, the "shady" world, and the old elite. As with much of modern mass communication, the significance of the magazine can fruitfully be interpreted in relation to the history and development of status groups, and the tensions among competing groups, in the fluid, changing cultural world of modern society.

The Half-Century gave social instruction in columns on manners, grooming, and entertaining. From the start, its content reflected the shift from an older ascetic work ethic to a newer life style accepting of worldly ways--the transition from the culture of production to the culture of consumption. A surprising amount of the content dramatized the uneasiness and ambivalence felt by middle-class blacks about this secularization of life styles in the modernizing urban milieu.

The uneasiness was evident in a continuing debate about the church. As Frazier argued, in the modernizing urban community many black churches were undergoing a process of secularization as they lifted old strictures and became tolerant of urban pleasures.[33] In letters to the Half-Century, old-timers sometimes condemned the church for tolerating worldly pleasures, immodest dress, and other changing

customs. Wavering on the issue, Half-Century writers sometimes sided with the attitude of the new urban cynicism, prevalent among youth, that the church was a racket, but at other times expressed alarm that young people were more occupied with entertainment than with religious instruction.

The ambivalence about the modernization of life styles was reflected in columns by Associate Editors Crichlow and Majors, who bemoaned the diminishing importance people attached to one another's character and the increasing tendency to size up others by superficial marks of conduct. Much of the magazine's fiction also dramatized the uncertain passage of middle-class persons from a world of fixed and deeply felt values to the transitory modern urban world with its superficial and changing standards. A common pattern in stories was the woman with social pretensions and expensive tastes who tried to live beyond her husband's means. In the end, she usually realized the folly of her ways and adopted more sensible habits. Thus the Half-Century's stories presented to the readers a ritualistic representation of their uneasy feelings about the rapid secularization of life styles and the new urban freedom with its increased acceptance of leisure, pleasure, and consumption.

The irony is that a stalwart representative of the old culture of production was helping to lay the foundation for the new culture of consumption. Anthony Overton wore clothes until they were threadbare and scoffed, "Clothes don't make the man. The man makes the clothes." Yet his most successful enterprise manufactured cosmetics for the modern urban culture with its new values of glamour and pleasure, and his magazine promulgated the life styles of this new cultural world. In letters to the editor, readers occasionally objected to the increasing use of cosmetics by modern women, but the staff saw no harm in it if a woman wanted to. Thus was emerging an embryonic creed, which celebrated individual expression and freedom of choice in satisfying individual wants, to supply the ideological scaffolding of the nascent consumer society. The transition to the culture of consumption was laying the foundation for the far greater success of black consumer magazines following the interlude of the Depression and the World War.

1. Interview with Anthony Overton III.

2. This argument is documented for general magazines in the well known article by Leo Lowenthal, "Biographies in Popular Magazines," reprinted in Lowenthal, Literature, Popular Culture, and Society (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), ch. 4, pp. 109-140.

3. Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931); William E. Leuchtenberg, The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Samuel P. Hays, "The Social Analysis of American Political History, 1880-1920," Political Science Quarterly, v. 80 (September 1965), pp. 373-394; David M. Kennedy, "Overview: The Progressive Era," The Historian, v. 37 (May 1975), pp. 453-468; William L. O'Neill, The Progressive Years (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975); Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Robert H. Wiebe, "The Progressive Years, 1900-1917," in William H. Cartwright and Richard L. Watson, Jr. (eds.), The Reinterpretation of American History and Culture (Washington: National Council of the Social Studies, 1973), pp. 425-442.

4. "Our Women and Children," New York Age, November 10, 1888, p. 2; "A New Race Monthly," Indianapolis Freeman, March 3, 1894, p. 4; Charles S. Johnson, "The Rise of the Negro Magazine," Journal of Negro History, v. 13 (January 1928), pp. 7-21; Patricia M. Cronin, Negro Magazines in America, 1833-1950, M.A. thesis, University of Missouri, 1951; I. Garland Penn, The Afro-American Press and Its Editors (Springfield, Mass.: Willey, 1891), pp. 116-126.

5. William Stanley Braithwaite, "Negro America's First Magazine," Negro Digest, v. 6 (December 1947), pp. 21-26; August Meier, "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Press: With Special Reference to the Colored American Magazine," Journal of Negro History, v. 38 (January 1953), pp. 67-90; Abby Arthur Johnson and Ronald Maberry Johnson, Propaganda and Aesthetics (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), pp. 4-16; Mary Fair Burks, A Survey of Black Literary Magazines in the United States, 1859-1940, Ed.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975, pp. 115-149; R. S. Elliott, "The Story of Our Magazine," Colored American Magazine, v. 3 (May 1901), pp. 43-77; W. E. H. Chase, "Negro Publications," Colored American Magazine, v. 9 (September 1905), pp. 491-495.

6. Roi Ottley, The Lonely Warrior (Chicago: Regnery, 1955), pp. 291-298; Andrew Buni, Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), pp. 117-119.

7. Hallie Beachem Brooks, A Description of Negro News-Stand Magazines and an Analysis of the Contents of a Selected Number of Negro Magazines, M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1946, p. 8.

8. Edward A. Shils, The Bases of Social Stratification in Negro Society, Carnegie-Myrdal Study, New York, 1940 (ms. in

Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library), pp. 61-65.

9. Interviews with Anthony Overton III and Oscar Hill, grandson of Anthony Overton: "McCabe's Country," New York Age, December 26, 1891, p. 1; "Mrs. Overton Dead," Chicago Defender, July 20, 1912, p. 2; "Some Chicagoans of Note," Crisis, v. 10 (September 1915), p. 242; Dewey R. Jones, "Chicago Claims Supremacy," Opportunity, v. 7 (March 1929), p. 93; Joseph J. Boris (ed.), Who's Who in Colored America, 1928-1929 (New York, 1929), p. 282; Arthur J. Wilson, "The Douglass National Bank of Chicago," in Frederic H. Robb (ed.), The Negro in Chicago, 1779-1929 (Chicago: Washington Intercollegiate Club of Chicago, 1929), p. 213; Allan H. Spear, Black Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 113.

10. "Anthony Overton," Journal of Negro History, v. 32 (July 1947), pp. 394-396; Abram L. Harris, The Negro as Capitalist (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1936), pp. 144-153; interviews with Anthony Overton III and Oscar Hill.

11. Anthony Overton to Booker T. Washington, March 8, 1904, Booker T. Washington to Anthony Overton, March 14, 1904, Washington Papers, Library of Congress; Chicago Broad Ax, February 8, 1913, p. 3, May 24, 1913, p. 1, September 6, 1913, p. 2, November 21, 1914, p. 4, June 19, 1915, p. 5; Chicago Defender, November 7, 1914, p. 3, June 26, 1915, p. 4, February 7, 1920, p. 1; Chicago Whip, February 28, 1920, p. 2; Christopher R. Reed, The Manifestations of Nationalism in the Black Belt of Chicago, 1920-1929, M.A. thesis, Roosevelt University, 1968, p. 41; interviews with Anthony Overton III and Oscar Hill.

12. Interviews with Olive Diggs, last editor of the Bee, Anthony Overton III, and Oscar Hill.

13. Boris (ed.), Who's Who in Colored America, p. 201; Frederic H. Robb (ed.), The Negro in Chicago, 1779-1927 (Chicago: Washington Intercollegiate Club of Chicago, 1927), p. 308; Chicago Broad Ax, January 21, 1911, p. 2, March 18, 1911, p. 1, April 8, 1911, p. 2, October 31, 1914, p. 2, December 19, 1914, p. 1; Chicago Defender, March 16, 1912, p. 1, March 30, 1912, p. 1, October 31, 1914, p. 3, November 7, 1914, p. 3.

14. Boris (ed.), Who's Who in Colored America, pp. 212-213; Elizabeth Greenebaum, "She Believes in Her People," Women's Journal, v. 13 (July 1928), pp. 11, 32; Addie W. Hunton and Kathryn M. Johnson, Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces (New York, 1920); Kathryn M. Johnson to W. E. B. DuBois, March 26, 1926, in Herbert Aptheker (ed.), The Correspondence of W. E. B. DuBois, v. 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), pp. 334-335; "A Year's Work," Crisis, v. 8 (July 1914), p. 142.

15. Boris (ed.), Who's Who in Colored America, pp. 252, 255; Who's Who of the Colored Race (Chicago, 1915), p. 183; M. A. Majors, "Some Thoughts on Race Building and Literature," Fraternal Advocate, v. 1 (November-December 1915), pp. 11-14; S. Laing Williams to Booker T. Washington, December 11, 1908, Washington Papers; Chicago Broad Ax,

June 4, 1904, p. 1; Indianapolis Freeman, February 9, 1895, p. 4.

16. Half-Century, v. 2 (February 1917), p. 3.

17. Half-Century, v. 3 (July 1917), p. 3.

18. "Newspapers," ms. in Illinois Writers Project, Woodson Library, Chicago, pp. 19-21; Robb (ed.), The Negro in Chicago, 1779-1929, pp. 214-215.

19. St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, Black Metropolis (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1945), p. 543 and passim; E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 295-296 and passim.

20. Albert Kreiling, "The Rise of the Black Press in Chicago," Journalism History, v. 4 (Winter 1977-78), pp. 132-136, 156; Albert Kreiling, The Making of Racial Identities in the Black Press, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1973, pp. 101-225.

21. Fenton Johnson, "Chicago Negro Aristocrats," ms. in Illinois Writers Project; E. Franklin Frazier, On Race Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 205 and passim; Frazier, Negro Family, pp. 295-296; Shils, Bases of Social Stratification, passim.

22. Kreiling, Making of Racial Identities, pp. 234-246; John P. Flynn, "Booker T. Washington: Uncle Tom or Wooden Horse," Journal of Negro History, v. 54 (July 1969), pp. 262-274.

23. Edward F. Wilson, "Negro Society in Chicago," Voice, v. 4 (July 1907), pp. 306-309; August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), passim. Studies of the journalism of the Race Radicals include Stephen R. Fox, The Guardian of Boston (New York: Atheneum, 1971); Paul G. Partington, "The Moon Illustrated Weekly--The Precursor of the Crisis," Journal of Negro History, v. 48 (July 1963), pp. 206-216; Elliott M. Rudwick, "W. E. B. DuBois in the Role of Crisis Editor," Journal of Negro History, v. 43 (July 1958), pp. 214-240.

24. Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 131-173; B. Joyce Ross, J. E. Spingarn and the Rise of the NAACP, 1911-1939 (New York: Atheneum, 1972), pp. 7-14 and passim; Leuchtenberg, Perils of Prosperity, p. 158 and passim; David P. Thelen, "Social Tensions and the Origins of Progressivism," Journal of American History, v. 56 (September 1969), pp. 323-341.

25. W. E. Burghardt DuBois, Dusk of Dawn (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1940), p. 277. Helpful in understanding the outlook of DuBois and other Race Radicals is S. P. Fullinwider, The Mind and Mood of Black America (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1969).

26. St. Clair Drake, Churches and Voluntary Associations in the Chicago Negro Community (mim., Chicago: Work Projects Adminis-

tration, 1940).

27. Recent studies of the political and literary journalism of the New Negroes include Theodore Kornweibel, Jr., No Crystal Stair (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975); Theodore G. Vincent (ed.), Voices of a Black Nation (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1973); Johnson and Johnson, Propaganda and Aesthetics, pp. 31-96.

28. E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957).

29. A helpful interpretation of background changes in Americans' concepts of success is John G. Cawelti, Apostles of the Self-Made Man (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

30. Bernard Bailyn et al., The Great Republic (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1977), ch. 32, "Modern Culture," pp. 1126-1157.

31. A nearly complete collection of the Half-Century has been reprinted by the Negro Universities Press, New York. The brief interpretation of its content presented here is based upon extensive reading throughout the collection. A more detailed interpretation of its content is presented in Kreiling, Making of Racial Identities, pp. 257-280.

32. Half-Century, v. 4 (April 1918), p. 3.

33. E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), pp. 49-52.